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PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993

Conference servicing of intergovernmental bodies convened at Nairobi

Note by the Secretary-General

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Committee for Programme and Coordination, in the context of its review of section 17, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 1/ at its thirty-first session, recommended that the General Assembly should consider, on the advice of the Advisory Committee for Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), the practice with regard to the inclusion in that section of conference-servicing costs relating to the intergovernmental bodies of UNEP and requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the overall issue of conference servicing relating to United Nations intergovernmental bodies convened at Nairobi.

2. The intergovernmental bodies convened at Nairobi are: the Governing Council of UNEP and its Committee of Permanent Representatives; and the Commission on Human Settlements and its Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat).

A. Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme

3. The Governing Council meets biennially for 10 working days (extended from 8 working days during the previous biennium) and receives conference services in all six official languages. The estimated cost of a regular 10-day session of the Council is $1,615,100, which is included in various objects of expenditure under section 17 of the proposed programme budget for 1992-1993.

B. Committee of Permanent Representatives

4. In its decision 11/2 of 23 May 1983, the Governing Council decided to discontinue the system of intersessional informal consultations with Governments, and with a view to providing continuity of coordination and cooperation between member States and the secretariat of UNEP, invited permanent representatives at Nairobi and/or government-designated officials to meet the Executive Director at least three times a year to consider administrative, budgetary and programme matters and to review progress in the implementation of the programme and Governing Council decisions, as well as specific issues proposed by the permanent representatives or the Executive Director. The meetings would last as necessary and should take place in each quarter, except that in which the session of the Council takes place. It was also recommended that the permanent representatives establish from among themselves a core group of 18 members, whose task would include, among other things, facilitating the preparations for Council sessions and monitoring and advising on the implementation of Council decisions.

5. In its decision 13/2 of 23 May 1985, the Governing Council, in accordance with rule 62 of its rules of procedure, decided to establish an open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives to consider and make recommendations to the Council on matters mentioned in decision 11/2 and to take action on any other matters specifically entrusted to it by the Council. The Committee would meet regularly with the Executive Director or his representative in February, September and December each year, and six weeks prior to the opening of the fourteenth session of the Council, and whenever deemed necessary by the Committee or by the Executive Director. In the same decision, the Council requested the Executive Director to take the necessary measures to implement the decision, within available resources, by providing the Committee services and facilities of the same kind as those he had provided in the past to meetings of permanent representatives.

6. On 18 June 1987, the Governing Council, in the context of its decision 14/4 on the periodicity and duration of its sessions, decided that the Committee of Permanent Representatives should continue to meet at least four times a year with the Executive Director on dates to be determined annually by the Committee itself, in consultation with the Executive Director.

7. In its decision 15/12 of 25 May 1989, the Governing Council, aware of article 1 of rule 63 of the Council's rules of procedure on its official and working languages and aware of article 3 of rule 62, which states that the rules of procedure of subsidiary organs shall be those of the Governing Council, as appropriate, subject to such modifications as the Council may decide upon in the light of proposals by the subsididary organs concerned, decided to recognize the requirements for full language services for meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and to provide them as soon as funding for the costs of these services can be provided from the regular budget of the United Nations. However, no specific provisions were made in the programme budget for conference-servicing of the Committee.

C. Commission on Human Settlements

8. The Commission on Human Settlements meets biennially for eight working days and receives conference services in all six official languages. The estimated cost of a regular eight-day session is $1,141,600, which is included under various objects of expenditure in the proposed programme budget for 1992-1993 under section 19, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat). 1/ In this connection, it should be noted that pre-session documentation in Chinese has not been provided for in the programme budget of the Centre, although it was in accordance with the Commission's rules of procedure, since China was not a member of the Commission and attended its meetings only as an observer. However, China is now a member of the Commission and has requested the provision of pre-session documentation in Chinese.

D. Committee of Permanent Representatives to the Centre

9. In its resolution 12/8 of 3 May 1989 the Commission on Human Settlements decided that for the next two years, the existing informal Committee of Permanent Representatives to the Centre and/or government-designated officials should continue to ensure liaison between Governments and the Executive Director in the interval between sessions of the Commission, its proceedings being informal, and recommended that the dates and contents of such liaison meetings should be determined in consultation between the Executive Director and permanent representatives.

10. In its resolution 13/3 of 8 May 1991, the Commission, recognizing that meeting servicing as was provided during meetings between the Executive Director and the informal Committee of Permanent Representatives and embassy focal points at Nairobi and/or government-designated officials could continue to be provided at no additional cost and be absorbed within existing resources, decided to request the Executive Director to meet at least four times a year with the Committee to review progress in the implementation of the programme of the Centre and Commission resolutions, as well as specific issues proposed by the permanent representatives or the Executive Director.

11. There are no specific provisions in proposed programme budget for 1992-1993 for the meetings of the Committee. Relevant costs are met within the overall provision for the Commission sessions in the programme budget of the Centre.

II. OTHER INTERGOVERNMENTAL BODIES SIMILAR TO THE COMMITTEES OF PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES CONVENED AT NAIROBI

12. There are other intergovernmental bodies similar to the committees of permanent representatives convened at Nairobi, notably those in the three regional commissions: Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

(ESCAP), Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

A. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

13. The Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by the Commission was established in 1974 by Commission resolution 143 (XXX). Subsequently, its terms of reference were revised in resolution 210 (XXXVI) of 29 March 1980. Some of the functions of the Committee are: to maintain close cooperation and consultation between the members and the secretariat of the Commission; to exchange views with the Executive Secretary and assist the secretariat in the formulation of the Commission's agenda; to discuss the programme of work and priorities, including extrabudgetary requirements and the medium-term plan; and to carry out any other tasks to be entrusted to it by the Commission.

14. The Committee meets approximately 12 times a year for half a day; interpretation is provided in Chinese, English, French and Russian, with documentation in English only. The relevant costs are met from within the overall provision for policy-making organs in the programme budget of ESCAP.

B. Economic Commission for Europe

15. In its decision P (45) of 14 December 1990, the Commission requested the Chairman to convene, between annual sessions, a one-day ad hoc informal meeting of the Commission, including facilities of translation and interpretation, at least once every three months, and to organize such consultations of the member States as may be necessary to ensure the success of the ad hoc informal meetings.

16. The meetings would have, inter alia, the following tasks: to consult on policy matters concerning the activities of the Commission; to assist in the preparations for the annual sessions of the Commission; to monitor progress in the work programmes of the Commission and to ensure the proper and expeditious implementation of the Commission's decisions; and to offer any necessary guidance to the Executive Secretary on the work of the Commission, including matters concerning the most efficient use of available staff and financial resources. The Commission in the same decision also decided that its annual session would be shortened with immediate effect to seven working days in response to new and more efficient working methods.

17. There are no specific provisions for these ad hoc meetings of the Commission. Relevant costs are met from within the conference-servicing allocations of the Commission, which are provided under Conference and library services, Geneva.

C. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

18. In its resolution of 18 May 1989, the Commission decided, inter alia, to invite member States to set up an advisory body comprising the heads of their diplomatic missions in Iraq to assist the Executive Secretary in the study of problems connected with the work of the Commission. An advisory body was established for this purpose comprising the heads of diplomatic missions of the member States and a representative from the Foreign Ministry of the host Government. The advisory body normally meets every four months for one day.

19. There are no specific provisions for the meetings of the advisory body. Relevant costs are met from within the overall provision for policy-making organs in the programme budget of ESCWA.

III. CURRENT CONFERENCE-SERVICING AND RELATED FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS AT NAIROBI

20. The conference facilities and equipment at the United Nations offices at Nairobi are provided in detail in annex I to the present report. Annex II shows the number of permanent conference-servicing staff of UNEP by category. Twenty-two posts (7 Professional and higher level and 15 Local level) or roughly 25 per cent of the permanent conference-servicing establishment of UNEP is charged against the regular budget; the rest of its conference-servicing staff is financed from voluntary contributions to the Environment Fund and much of its conference equipment was purchased also from the Fund. In addition, as indicated in paragraph 3 above, a total amount of $1,615,100 relating to the regular 10-day biennial session of the Governing Council is included under section 17 of the proposed programme budget for 1992-1993. Of that amount, $1,328,700 relate to the recruitment of freelance interpreters and other language staff.

21. Habitat does not have permanent conference servicing staff. As indicated in paragraph 8, a total amount of $1,141,600 has been included under various objects of expenditure in section 19 of the proposed programme budget for 1992-1993 relating to the 8-day biennial session of the Commission. Of that amount, $1,098,000 would be used to cover the cost of interpreters and other language staff to be provided through Conference and library services, Geneva.

22. It may be recalled in this connection that prior to the present biennium, conference-servicing requirements of Habitat were included under section 29 C relating to Conference and library services, Geneva, 2/ which provides the Commission with interpretation, translation, typing, reproduction and distribution facilities. In 1990-1991, consistent with the recommendation of ACABQ, a special adjustment was made involving the transfer to section 19, Habitat 3/ of a total of $966,100 (at revised 1989 rates) from budget sections 28F, Administration and common services, Geneva 2/ and 29 C, Conference and library services, Geneva, for the costs of providing documentation, interpretation and other related conference-servicing costs for sessions of the Commission. However, conference-servicing staff for the

sessions of the Commission continues to be provided by Geneva or other United Nations offices as required.

23. UNEP assists Habitat with the reproduction of pre-session and in-session documentation; additional daily internal reproduction staff requirements are met by three Local level staff assigned by Habitat to the UNEP documents reproduction unit as the Centre's share in its operating costs, in addition to payment of internal reproduction supplies utilized on the Centre's behalf. Assistance is also given by UNEP to the Centre for urgent translations on a case-by-case basis.

IV. SUGGESTED MODALITIES AND RELATED FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

24. The current conference-servicing arrangements at Nairobi provide for a sufficient degree of flexibility for both UNEP and Habitat in the planning and servicing of meetings of their intergovernmental bodies. Nevertheless, the possibility of a joint conference-servicing establishment at Nairobi, and possibly at both Nairobi and Addis Ababa, will be kept under review and, if circumstances suggest that different arrangements could lead to improved efficiency and economy, relevant proposals would be submitted to the General Assembly.

25. As regards the servicing of the Committee of Permanent Representatives of UNEP, a review of existing arrangements for servicing of similar bodies at Habitat, ESCAP, ECE and ESCWA indicates that the related costs are being accommodated from within the overall provisions made in the budgets of those organizational units for conference servicing of their respective intergovernmental bodies. With regard to UNEP, however, should the General Assembly concur with UNEP Governing Council decision 15/12 to extend full conference servicing to its Committee of Permanent Representatives, as its subsidiary organ, the related provision would need to be made under section 17, UNEP, of the proposed programme budget for 1992-1993.

26. Based on the relevant decisions of the Governing Council, and on the assumption that the Committee will meet four times a year for a one-day session with conference services provided in all six languages, the estimated cost (at 1991 rates) would be $614,400 for the biennium, on the basis of a cost of $76,800 per one-day session.

27. It is proposed that a portion of that amount, namely, $150,000, which is roughly equivalent to the 25 per cent portion of the UNEP permanent conference-servicing establishment under the regular budget, be included under section 17 of the proposed programme budget for 1992-1993. The General Assembly might wish to request the Governing Council of UNEP to authorize the financing of the balance of the requirements of its Committee of Permanent Representatives from the Environment Fund.

28. Regarding the requirements for pre-session documentation in Chinese for the Commission on Human Settlements, in view of the limited provisions for conference-servicing of the Commission and the lack of an established conference-servicing establishment within Habitat, it is proposed that additional funds estimated at $73,000 be appropriated under section 19, Habitat, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993.

V. CONCLUSION

29. Should the Fifth Committee decide to endorse the recommendations made in paragraphs 27 and 28 above, a statement of programme budget implications would be submitted, requesting additional appropriations of $150,000 under section 17, UNEP and $73,000 under section 19, Habitat, of the proposed programme budget for 1992-1993.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/46/6/Rev.1), Vol. I.

2/ Ibid., Forty-fourth Session Supplement No. 6 (A/44/6/Rev.1), Vol. II.

3/ Ibid., Vol. I.

Annex I

UNITED NATIONS OFFICES AT NAIROBI, CONFERENCE FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

Room	Capacity (No. of seats)	Simultaneous interpretation equipment (No. of languages)
Room 1		8
Representatives at table	218	
Advisers	218	
Total	436	
Room 2		8
Representatives at table	276	
Advisers	276	
Total	552	
Room 3		4
Representatives at table	100	
Advisers	100	
Total	200	
Room 4		4
Representatives at table	100	
Advisers	100	
Total	200	
Rooms 2, 3 and 4 combined		8
Representatives at table	476	
Advisers	476	
Total	952	
Rooms 3 and 4 combined		8
Representatives at table	200	
Advisers	200	
Total	400	

Room	Capacity (No. of seats)	Simultaneous interpretation equipment (No. of languages)
Room 5		-
Representatives at table	25	
Room 6		2
Representatives at table	25	
Room 7		2
Representatives at table	30	
Room 8		2
Representatives at table	25	

Total: Seven rooms (1,468 seats) with simultaneous interpretation equipment and 1 room (25 seats) with no interpretation equipment.

Annex II

NUMBER OF PERMANENT CONFERENCE-SERVICING STAFF OF UNEP BY CATEGORY

	Posts
Chief of Service/Deputy Chief of Service	2
Conference officers	2
General Service auxiliary staff (including Documents Control)	12
Interpreters - none; provision has been made for free-lance recruitment	-
Senior translators/editors	
Arabic	1
Chinese	1
English	2
French	3
Russian	1
Spanish	2
Translators/editors	
Arabic	1
Chinese	1
English	1
French	1
Russian	1
Spanish	2
Supervisor, Typing Pool	1
Typists	
Arabic	2
Chinese	2
English	4
French	4
Russian	2
Spanish	4

	Posts
Reproduction and distribution	
Professional	1
General Service	35 a/
Total permanent conference-servicing staff	88

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a/ Including three staff members financed by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat).